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by Jean Daniélou

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by George H. Dunne

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by Horace Gregory

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*Editor*
EDWARD S. SKILLIN

*Managing Editor*
JAMES O'GARA

*Associate Editors*
JAMES FINN
RICHARD HORCHLER

*Drama Critic:* RICHARD HAYES; *Movie Critic:* PHILIP T. HARTUNG; *Paris:* ROBERT BARRAT; *Rome:* GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN; *Great Britain:* MICHAEL P. FOGARTY

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THE
# Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

## week by week

### RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION IN AMERICA

SEVERAL EVENTS have joined within recent weeks to raise the general level of discussion concerning Church-State relations and, more particularly, the position of the Catholic in a pluralistic society. A single program on TV and a continuing discussion in the *New Republic* have done much to reveal to the unknowing the depths of ignorance and misunderstanding from which the discussion must be rescued, and they have themselves already done much to hasten that rescue.

For the most part, consideration of crucial issues of "Church and State" and "Religion in Society" has been left to scholars and scholarly journals, religious and legal publications, and to the few people and magazines that attempt to mediate these issues to a wider audience. Ordinarily, issues have been brought to public attention only when some controversy shattered the fragile illusion of agreement and exposed the latent tensions, fears and aggressions which are present in our national life.

Some Americans seemed genuinely perplexed, for example, that the Catholic Bishops of America should issue a statement concerning birth control and foreign policy. Comments on the propriety of the statement ranged widely, but informed, cogent criticism was infrequent. And when Senator John Kennedy announced his candidacy for Presidential nomination, many Catholics, resenting the imputation that his religion might disqualify him, suggested that he not answer any questions concerning his religion. His religion, they asserted, was nobody's business.

What is particularly discouraging in most reports and comments on the controversies is that they are not seen in their proper context. Journals which in other areas are sophisticated and intelligent have frequently proved inept and obtuse in dealing with religio-political questions. Catholics, for example, who have adapted themselves perfectly well to American democratic society and who have proved themselves firm in its defense, often discuss that society in terms appropriate to a past time, another place. To outside observers they seem, at the least, guilty of political schizophrenia.

On the other hand, there are non-Catholic "liberals" who fail to grasp the function of the Church in society, who resent its "presumption" in making judgments, who view the Catholic Church as a threat to the proper workings of the democratic free society. The tendency of such liberals is to "curb" the influence and power of the Church, if need be by granting undue power to the State and even by calling into question the democratic commitment of the individual Catholic. These liberals, in the view of their critics, would allow the Church to be the Church and a Catholic to be a Catholic only if the State were accepted as the ultimate authority.

WHAT IS most regrettable in discussions between members of these groups is not the disagreement itself—that is expected—but the fact that the terms of disagreement are not grasped. Their arguments most frequently bypass each other and each group leaves the debate more firmly convinced of its own righteousness and wisdom.

A recent WNTA-TV program, "Open End," presented a discussion of religion in a free society which showed conclusively that the usual outcome is not the necessary outcome. Members of the panel, which was moderated by David Susskind, included Paul Blanshard; William Clancy, editor of *Worldview;* Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg; Senator Eugene McCarthy; William Lee Miller of Yale Divinity School; and the Right Rev. James A. Pike, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of California. For three and one-half hours these men dis-



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cussed religion in American life. Except for a couple of lapses by Mr. Blanshard the discussion was civilized, generally lucid, and pertinent. The courteous terms of the debate did not preclude sharp disagreement. In fact it was because a greater than usual intellectual precision was attained that Mr. Blanshard's parochial bias emerged more nakedly than usual. (In response to Catholics who called to complain because no priest was present, Mr. Susskind said that he had invited a number of priests but none had accepted.)

More significant and encouraging as an event in our national life is the continuing attention given to present Church-State relations by the *New Republic*. While this journal has regularly addressed itself to religio-political questions, much of the recent comment was engendered by a review written by Mr. Clancy of Mr. Blanshard's latest book, *God and Man in Washington*. In his review for the *New Republic,* Mr. Clancy, a former associate editor of The Commonweal, sharply criticized both the book and the philosophical presuppositions upon which it rests.

The response to his review (including a letter from Mr. Blanshard) was of such a quantity and quality that the editors devoted a lead editorial to a reasoned, incisive appraisal of the incident. The editors, further, submitted a list of questions concerning the "objectives of the Church" in America to John C. Bennett, Dean of Union Theological Seminary; to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., of Harvard University; and to Jaroslav Pelikan, professor of theology at the University of Chicago. Their answers, particularly those of Professor Pelikan, attack common misconceptions concerning the Church in American life. The *New Republic* is publishing these related comments—Mr. Clancy's review, a selection of correspondence, editorials, the symposium, plus additional material—in a special supplement which can be ordered from that magazine (*The New Republic,* 1244 19th Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. Price $.25).

While we think the *New Republic* supplement and the "Open End" program would be of special interest to readers of The Commonweal, we think it an event of unusual importance that they were addressed to audiences less exposed to those discussions which have been our constant concern. We are confident that the *New Republic* has already done much to raise the intellectual level of discussion concerning religion in American life. We hope that its influence will be reflected in the debates and controversies which will inevitably arise in the immediate future.

## NEGRO PROTESTS

WHAT began as scattered demonstrations by Negro students here and there in the South against the prevailing custom of lunch-counter discrimination has in a few weeks' time swelled spontaneously into a great mass movement of protest. The spread of this movement in all directions—including northward—is a dramatic and, as has been said, a deeply moving spectacle. Every day more and more Negro youths have stepped forward and proclaimed their faith in the cause of equal rights, and done so in the face of insults, threats, blows and imprisonment.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has now entered the struggle, offering legal aid to the scores of demonstrators—a surprising number of them Southern whites—who have been arrested on various charges, tried, convicted and fined or imprisoned. Thurgood Marshall, the N.A.A.C.P.'s chief counsel, has taken personal charge of these "lunch-counter" cases, and the Association has vowed to appeal every case, up to the Supreme Court if necessary.

It seems clear that this "lunch-counter movement" will become a historic milestone in the American Negro's efforts to win the rights of citizenship which are guaranteed him by the Constitution. And insofar as it points toward a historic advance for the American Negro, insofar as it puts before the nation a passionate avowal that justice is worth suffering for, the "lunch-counter" protest unquestionably marks a memorable stage in the development of our American culture.

Much as we believe in the importance of this chapter in our history, however, we would not have it a chapter written in blood. News from the Southern cities where the "new Negro" has taken his stand indicates growing anger and animosity between the races; violence flares more often and more dangerously. Throughout the South, it is reported, racial tensions are building up to a point where a tragic explosion into rioting and bloodshed will become probable rather than, as it already is, merely possible.

Such a disaster must not be allowed to happen. President Eisenhower has heretofore been reluctant to pass any judgments on the South's travail over integration, but the present danger of serious racial conflict in the South has moved him to a rare appeal for Negro-white cooperation. "There ought to be bi-racial conferences in every city and every community of the South," he said, in the attempt to adjust our racial problems in peace.



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We cannot express too strongly our endorsement of the President's plea. There can be no question that in his rejection of violence and call for good will the President is speaking for and to all Americans, North and South, Negro and white. It seems inevitable that the present struggle will bring a tremendous change in the status of the American Negro, and it will be a change wrought with pain and difficulty; but it need not be, and must not be, a change wrought at the cost of bloodshed and death. All Americans must agree on that.

## BISHOP IN PRISON

MUCH HAS been written about Bishop James E. Walsh of Maryknoll and there will be more, but it is hard to say anything that will not seem pale in contrast to his life and present situation. Charged with being a "United States spy" who directed the operations of "a traitorous counter-revolutionary clique," Bishop Walsh has been sentenced by a Chinese Communist "people's court" to twenty years' imprisonment. It cannot reasonably be expected that Bishop Walsh, now sixty-nine, will survive an ordeal that has killed younger and healthier men.

Bishop Walsh had the chance to leave China some years ago, and no one, surely, would have thought less of him if he had taken the opportunity. But the Bishop would not leave unless he was expelled, for he feared that to do so would seem like abandonment to the Catholics of China who have for years been suffering a relentless persecution at the hands of the Communists. Hundreds of priests and laymen have been imprisoned for their faith; no one knows for sure how many have already died, but the number is large and it grows greater almost daily. Soon, it must be feared, Bishop Walsh's name will be among them.

Catholics all over the world, of course, will pray for Bishop Walsh and honor his name. He is one more on the long roll of honor reserved for victims of Communist persecution of the Church, in the Soviet Union, in Poland, in Yugoslavia,—wherever the Communists have power. But American Catholics in particular will feel his persecution and imprisonment most keenly, for Bishop Walsh is an American priest, a member of the first group sent to China in 1918 by Maryknoll, a missionary society that always seems particularly American in style. In his ordeal Bishop Walsh will not be forgotten by American Catholics. God grant him strength in the days ahead.

## MORE MEN AT WORK

EMPLOYMENT statistics for the month of February are now available. Granting that all is never rosy in this less than perfect world, the Administration is entitled to take considerable pleasure in the picture they present.

The number of Americans who held jobs in February—64,520,000—sets a record for the month, jumping better than half a million to a monthly peak more than one million over the previous high of February 1957. Unemployment, which usually rises in February, this time dropped by more than two hundred thousand, putting the total below the four million mark. This decline pushed the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate down to 4.8 per cent, the lowest since October 1957, and the first time the rate has gone below the 5 per cent mark since the 1957-58 recession.

There is much, then, on the credit side of the national picture. On the debit side there was a small drop in the average factory work week and a comparable slight decline in average factory take-home, items that reflect a slow-down of the boom in automobile and allied industries which has prevailed since the settlement in steel. This development, taken in conjunction with the fact that the predicted 1960 upswing has not begun as well as anticipated, gives some grounds for concern, although the situation is certainly not critical. More serious, perhaps, is the pattern of long-term unemployment. Here the figure was 500,000 less than a year ago, but the total did not show reduction from January to February, remaining at 965,000, which is still 350,000 over the corresponding 1957 total.

This figure, then, reflecting hard-core unemployment, remains a grave problem. So too does a related fact, the regional character of much long-term unemployment; the failure to cope with the need for industrial development and economic diversification in depressed regions remains a national failure. Nonetheless, the newly released statistics are encouraging, and Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell was quite justified in saying that the national employment picture showed continued improvement.

## ORDEAL BY BATTLE

BOTH SIDES are getting ready to intensify their military operations in the Algerian war. The hopes raised in September by General de Gaulle's promise to end the hostilities on the basis



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of Algerian self-determination—and its acceptance by the National Liberation Front—have been virtually extinguished. As far as a viable solution is concerned, even the General's firmness in quelling the uprising of the *colons* last January apparently has not led anywhere.

For this dashing of hopes it would seem that the General's recent statements are primarily responsible. On his latest Algerian visit he assured the French army that "The Algerian problem will not be solved for a long time. . . . Everything hinges on the final victory of the French army." According to his latest tack, a military surrender by the nationalists would be the only basis for a settlement. Since these statements were published, it has become known that back on February 18 the Algerians had informed the General of their willingness to send a peace emissary to Paris without any prerequisite conditions or specified agenda for the negotiations. The French Government has not denied this but only insists that it has had no written message to this effect—and that it would still be willing to receive one.

Meanwhile, however, the Algerian F.L.N. has taken General de Gaulle at his latest word and declared that all chance of negotiation is over. The government-in-exile, in Tunis, has embarked on a new campaign to secure diplomatic recognition and support. The Moslem peoples in particular and the Afro-Asian world generally can be counted on to agitate the Algerian question once more at the United Nations and elsewhere. The Communists could hardly be more pleased.

In France itself opposition to de Gaulle is mounting fast. Disappointment and disillusion are nationwide, as the General was regarded as the one man who would produce an Algerian solution and end the five-years' war. Because of this, the M.R.P. is calling for a more democratic setup in France.

Guy Mollet, head of the French Socialists, declared: "It is not possible—in fact I say it is not true because he has many times said and written the contrary—that the President of the Republic believes in a purely military solution, and still less that he can think of a solution so obtained as being lasting . . . . The offer of a cease-fire must be maintained, renewed, and made precise."

Evidence of growing opposition to de Gaulle is supplied by the National Assembly, which now has a decidedly subsidiary role. When that legislative body, contrary to the General's wishes, called for a special session to discuss Algerian and other matters, he refused to sign the petititon to authorize the session.

The prospect of full-scale resumption of the Algerian war has many doleful aspects. It will further weaken France's contribution to the NATO defenses, heighten the agitation of the Afro-Asian peoples against Europe and America and extend the opportunities of the Sino-Soviet axis. Specifically, its effect on present African unrest will be incalculable.

And to think that the war itself with its innumerable human casualties and its unspeakable cruelties, tortures and reprisals will be going on! Moreover, there can be little hope of improvement in the various detention camps where it was recently reported, among other things, that Algerian infants and children were actually being permitted to die of starvation. Military experts give France little chance of ever subduing the Algerian rebels (nor the rebels of decisively defeating the French). It is worse than folly to continue so costly and tragic a struggle. A solution can come about only if the friends of the two adversaries succeed in persuading first the French, and then the Algerians, to abandon it.

## THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

OF POLLS and surveys of voter sentiment there seems to be no end—nor of the ingenuity in ferreting out the average American's authentic political sentiments. *Life* has attempted a comprehensive project of this sort, recently, in an effort to draw up the qualifications of the ideal Presidential candidate *according to the average voter*. Unhappily the ingenuity displayed in eliciting responses in such a way that the men and women polled did not realize they were revealing their most heartfelt political sentiments was not paralleled by an informative presentation of the results.

Enough is stated, however, to give a sketchy glimpse of the "ideal" candidate. Such virtues as the following were most highly prized by this sampling of the electorate: firmness of principle along with talent for conciliation and compromise; experience in foreign affairs; non-partisanship; decisiveness; ability to manifest the common touch (an attribute sought much less frequently than the others cited here). But whom do most of these skillfully investigated people have in the back of their minds when they betray their predilection for a leader with all these political virtues? The survey didn't say, but, hastily running through these attributes, we would venture a guess: none other than Dwight D. Eisenhower.



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# Hope and the Christian

*It is the essence of hope to hold a positive attitude in regard to time*

by JEAN DANIÉLOU

THE PROBLEM of civilization's future cannot be evaded. This is an age of crisis. Events are of global consequence: technical inventions place in men's hands power never known before; economic upheavals shatter so-called classic economic laws and demand a re-examination of the distribution of wealth; lands across the sea, once held as colonies or kept economically dependent on the nations of the West, have won political autonomy.

The future fills some men with dread. All they hold dear seems in danger. They have never distinguished between eternal values and the expression of these values in terms of bourgeois civilization; therefore they feel that they must defend the past from the assaults of the future. Others, on the contrary, trust the new forces unreservedly and believe that scientific progress and social transformations will produce an earthly paradise. We must ask ourselves what connection there is between Christian hope which has for its object the heavenly city, and temporal hope, that which limits itself to the future well-being of the earthly city.

It is of the essence of hope to hold a positive attitude in regard to time. This attitude which seems so reasonable to modern man, the ancients would have found very strange. Time to them was an enemy. A revolt against time, Mircea Eliade tells us, was characteristic of primitive religions. Rites were performed to abolish time by imitating archetypes. Whatever was without an exemplar was without meaning. There was never anything new in the world. Disregard for time was especially marked in ancient India. Time consisted of a series of rebirths which in their turn brought about new beginnings. It was the part of a wise man to free himself from these rebirths, by rejoining the eternal part of himself which was identical with the eternal principle of all things.

The same is true of thinkers in ancient Greece. Plato thought that the real world was the world of archetypal ideas and that the world of time was an illusion, a changing image of eternity. Aristotle believed that the individual existence and the single event were without meaning: only the unchanging laws regulating the universe were valid. Similarly in our own time Brunschwieg teaches that mathematical laws are the only true reality and reproaches Christians for attaching so much importance to personal existence. The Stoics conceived history to be an eternal return in which nothing could ever be new; and in recent years Nietzsche and Spengler have repeated this pagan vision of history.

Even where time is not condemned as evil, it is held to be suspect. The wise man expects nothing. That is the secret of happiness. To have no desires is the best way to have no disappointments. Never let fortune determine happiness. Such is the wisdom of Buddha: freedom from desires means freedom from suffering. Such was the wisdom of the Stoics: distinguish between what we can and cannot control, and attach ourselves only to the former. Such was the goal of a man like Gide: claiming the possession of Olympian wisdom and longing to die having lost all hope. Such was also the goal of Camus, Malraux, Montherlant and so many other present-day thinkers who affirm that it is man's greatness to have no other end, that to look for any reward is to vilify this greatness, and that a tragic end is to achieve the plenitude of greatness.

ALL this is another way of saying that the Bible completely reversed all values when it gave meaning to time and placed hope in the future. The man who knows the Bible thinks of time as the place where a divine plan is being shaped and he looks forward

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Father Jean Daniélou, S.J., is the distinguished French theologian, author of the recently published *The Lord of History*. This article is part of *The Christian Today*, soon to be published in the United States by Desclee.



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to the completion of this plan. Hope is, for him, this looking forward. Thus he avoids what seemed natural to the pagans—a nostalgia for the past. Jean Héring writes that "The Christian ideal is not the exiled princess longing to return, it is Abraham setting out towards an unknown land which God will show him." Ulysses, the hero of the ancients, after his years of wandering returns to his starting point and thus cancels time. Abraham knew no return. He left Ur of the Chaldees and never went back. He embarked on "the adventure of time," forgetting, as Saint Paul tells us, "what was behind so as to stretch forward to things that are ahead."

Faith in the future was from the first the special message of the Bible. Hope, henceforth, was to move like some refreshing breeze through the pessimism of the ancient world. But with the passage of the years it lost its religious roots and became secularized. In the seventeenth century Voltaire dared to substitute faith in progress for Bossuet's faith in providence. In the nineteenth century, prodigious technical advances made man set no limits to his own powers. This new faith hastened the spread of capitalism. As this declines, Communism strives to take its place. Even now these two forms of optimism confront us: Western liberalism as presented by Jaspers and Toynbee, or, on the other hand, Eastern Communism as presented by the Marxists.

Rightly do Christians denounce modern optimism and declare that it has nothing in common with the theological virtue of hope. Great Christian thinkers of the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, a Bloy, a Péguy, a Papini, a Chesterton, cannot find words sufficiently sarcastic to deride the myth of progress. No one can deny that their attitude is in many ways justified. Faith in progress is a caricature of hope. Resting as it does on man's power not God's, it is without any foundation or norm, and it is doomed to misadventures. Limited to earthly perspectives, it has no place for hope in the future resurrection and life everlasting, which are based on Christ's rising from the dead.

But if Christians of our day have been right in their denunciations of the illusions of the myth of progress, they have often fallen into a pessimism which regards the future with distrust and they have taken their stand with the forces of conservatism against the forces of progress. A salutary realism, which gives Christians a sense of sin and a spirit of detachment from what is human, ought not prevent Christians from sharing legitimate aspirations for the improvement of the conditions of human life.

Here we must pause to clarify our position. When we speak of human *hope,* we ought to distinguish between two different realities. Hope may be understood to mean an ideological optimism which is a secular degradation of the theological virtue of hope. A Christian can have no part in optimism of this kind. Or it may be considered as an aspiration towards better living conditions; many men are filled with this desire, either because of the sub-human level of life around them, or because they have been led to believe that modern technical advances promise such improvement. Christians may well share these aspirations.

THEREFORE it is our right, in fact it is our duty, to share the temporal hopes of the men of our era. This is an era of hope. We are not always aware of this becouse we are not always filled with hope: only the poor hope, we are often rich. . . . But we ought to open ourselves to hope, even if we have many possessions. When I speak of the poor, I mean all who cannot find satisfaction for their legitimate aspirations for bread, work or freedom. Christians are obliged by their religion to take all suitable measures to further these aspirations. It is of the essence of Christianity to offer spiritual hope to all men, and it is now clear that Christianity also brings temporal hope to the poor of this world.

Moreover, modern men armed with all the new technical skills feel entitled to hope for great things. They are acquiring mastery over the material world and can make it serve them. They are gaining control over the biological world and can lessen pain and conquer disease. We know that the value of these advances depends on the use that is made of them, and that, alone, they are powerless to transform man. But we also think that they are good in themselves and that when men use them life becomes more human. Now this is precisely the Christian's duty. Technical progress is a fact. We need not deplore its dangers but we must take care that it contributes to man's true good. While some men face the future with anguish and see only what threatens them, we Christians must find reason for hope and set about building the new city.

Are these earthly hopes connected in any way with the theological virtue of hope? The answer, at first, seems to be no. The theological virtue is a firm assurance, based on God's fidelity to His promises, that we will obtain spiritual good things in this world and eternal life in the next. Is not its object God Himself? And is not its purpose to lift our desires above life here, where they rest?

And does not the Bible teach us from the first page to the last that God never promised earthly blessings to those who serve Him? Does not the book of Job warn us against such illusions? Is this not the answer to the apparent scandal of the injustice of a world in which the innocent so often suffer while their oppressors prosper? Is this not meant to teach us the true measure of earthly goods? Pius XI has written: "It is easy to see how little God thinks of riches be-



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cause He gives them as often to His enemies as to His friends."

Furthermore, did Christ ever promise earthly goods to His followers? True, He gave bread to hungry crowds, but He did this to teach them that there is another bread that comes down from heaven, and it was this bread He promised to send. Far from assuring His friends enjoyment here below, He announced that they would be persecuted for His name's sake. That is why Teresa of Avila cried out in the midst of her trials, "Lord, it is not surprising that you have so few friends." But is there still room for temporal hope? Is this not enough to justify those who reproach Christians for dissuading souls from temporal tasks and urging them towards eternal goods?

In the political order we reach similar conclusions. If fidelity to God was the reason for some of the great victories of the past, national prosperity would be a proof of God's blessing, defeat a punishment. This is the claim of certain historians. Eusebius believed that Constantine's empire was the fulfillment of messianic prophecies, Bossuet found justification for monarchy in the kingship of Louis XIV. Nothing could be more dangerous than a theory of providence that sees success as a seal of divine approval. With far deeper insight Herbert Butterfield has pointed out that in the Old Testament the Chosen People could be unhappy and that the victory of pagan nations was not a sign of their election. The judgment of history is not the judgment of God. Hope is the expectancy of those who await a judgment from God that is more just than that of history.

But this does not mean that in history there are no judgments of God. It is difficult to reconcile this with the mystery of the Cross, yet this mystery does not destroy the primordial relation of justice and happiness. This seems to be a permanent search of the human heart. The Cross, a temporal reverse, prevents this search from being satisfied on earth. It forces men to rise higher. It points to everlasting life. But it succeeds in negating the search on the earthly plane only by supposing its existence. Even though God does not always hear our prayers for temporal goods, He still wants us to ask for such things. A mother's prayer, entrusting the life of her children to God, proceeds from a very sure intuition of a religious soul.

THERE is still another way in which human hopes are connected with the theological virtue. This is the bond that exists between the virtue of hope and charity. Let me explain what I mean. The theological virtue of hope is the expectation of eternal blessings. But the practice of charity is the condition Christ laid down for their possession. Now, we have said, that one of the objects of charity is to fulfill the aspirations of the poor. So the struggle in the earthly city to give bread to the hungry, to clothe the naked, is a prerequisite to becoming a citizen of the heavenly city. Christ Himself has said so. That is why He who gave drink to the thirsty, who sheltered the homeless, who visited the prisoners, will be brought on the last day by the Judge into the Kingdom whose doors He alone can open. This is theological hope: the desire to possess eternal goods and the practice of charity alone makes this possible. This same practice of charity is also the surest guarantee of civilization and the safest foundation for the temporal hopes of men.

In our day charity has acquired an institutional character. Individuals have only limited opportunities for doing good. Modern man knows that his greatest responsibility consists in improving institutions. In the depths of his conscience he knows that he will have to give the Sovereign Judge an account not only of his personal conduct but of the efforts he has made to solve wage and housing problems, and to promote world peace. He knows that a few private acts of charity will be no dispensation.

We have reached the heart of our problem. If all that we have said is true, Christians should now be the most active workers in the fight for social justice and international peace. Many today, even some non-Christians, see that Christianity is the only force capable of giving meaning to civilization. We agree yet we cannot hide the fact that for more than a century, despite certain brilliant achievements, Christianity has failed to meet this obligation. It has failed because many Christians, ignoring the repeated teaching of the Sovereign Pontiffs, have been motivated by an egoistic anxiety for their own personal salvation and by an exclusively self-interested concern about things temporal. These Christians have forgotten the bond that links these two activities. They have disregarded their absolute obligation to further the reign of God's law, which is justice and charity. First, they must be converted to this law; else they can never influence civilization.

The collapse we are witnessing today is not that of the social doctrine of the Church because this doctrine has been but laxly applied. The collapse is that of a Christian world not truly Christian. Yet the world is turning even now to Christianity. It is not the world that doubts Christians, but Christians who no longer believe in themselves. They do not believe in the social efficacy of their faith. Their disbelief springs from a bad conscience. Lastly, their disbelief is a form of laziness and a kind of comfort that dispenses them from effort. They settle down with pleasant hopes about the hereafter and they dispense themselves from working for the betterment of man's temporal condition. But things are not quite that simple. It is in struggling for the present city that the future city is won.



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*The future depends on the unity of the Christian Democrats*

# Italy's Divided Middle

by GEORGE H. DUNNE

ITALY'S most pregnant political problem of the moment is that of the unity of the Christian Democratic Party. At stake is not merely the future of a political party, but quite possibly the future of the Italian state and nation. The Communists, along with many others, fully realize this. For weeks almost every issue of *L'Unità,* their expertly edited newspaper which has been known to scoop *Osservatore Romano* even on ecclesiastical news, has rung the changes on what it calls the "crisis" in the D.C. Togliatti has developed the theme at every opportunity. The Socialist Party is equally alive to the situation.

Naturally, both Communists and Socialists tend to exaggerate the elements of disunity and to hope for the worst. Nevertheless, the problem is real, and no doubt arises from the interclass character of the D.C., to which the Communists are fond of calling attention and in which they see the seeds of irreconcilable conflict. Actually, however, it may be doubted that the interclass nature of the party or the problems arising from that fact are greater than in either of the two major American political parties. The line which divides, or once divided, the Eisenhower and Old Guard Republicans and the chasm that separates the archly conservative Southern wing from the Northern and Western wings of the Democratic Party are at least as broad as any ideological differences within the Christian Democratic Party in Italy.

The difference is that in the United States both parties cut across class lines, whereas in Italy the D.C. confronts two powerful and highly organized parties which openly profess to represent a single class, the working class. The virtue of the American political system is that it is based upon an implicit recognition of the fact that the irreplaceable human values which genuine democracy seeks to achieve and to safeguard cannot be realized except by striking a balance of interests. The theory is that it is the responsibility of government, and therefore of the party in power, to represent and harmonize the interests of all.

There may be wide differences of opinion on how best to realize the interests of all. There may even be those who, with Charlie Wilson, identify the interests of all with the interests of General Motors. When Republicans handle the scales the balance may be more weighted in favor of business, especially big business, and what is called private enterprise. When Democrats handle the scales the balance may favor the worker (except in the South) and the average man. But there are union leaders and union members who vote Republican, as there are businessmen and business leaders who support the Democrats. And both parties compete for the sometimes fickle favor of the farmer, whose problem, solved by neither party to date, is the curious one of being overly successful in producing food in a world where many go hungry.

IN THE United States no party openly identifying itself with a single class or a hyphenated class is conceivable. There have been many efforts to establish such a party, none of them long successful. There is occasional talk of a Labor Party by labor leaders in moments of disenchantment, but such talk has more the sound of a minatory tactic than of a serious proposal.

In Italy, however, the confrontation with the Communist and Socialist parties makes the task of the D.C. more difficult. (It might be argued, on the credit side, that this confrontation also helps keep the D.C. true to its genealogy and to its ontology.) It cannot afford to lose the laboring masses. But the controlling factor is not whether the Communist or the Socialist parties do serve the best interests of the workers, but whether the workers are persuaded that they do. Certainly the Communist Party bends every effort to the task of persuasion. The method is not reasoned argument, but the ceaseless repetition of slogans. The Party does not attempt to prove that it is the workers' party, it simply affirms endlessly that it is, while with equal persistence it affirms that the D.C. is the party of the monopolists.

That many are persuaded, despite the dramatic demonstration of Hungary, is indicated by the 6,704,905 votes polled by the party in the 1958 elections. Not all of these, to be sure, were workers. Many were the votes of peasants. Like the peasants of China, who

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Father George H. Dunne, S.J., a long-time contributor to The Commonweal, is now in Rome.



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less than twenty years ago welcomed Mao Tse-tung's program of agrarian reform and today are herded into the communes which seem to appall even a seasoned veteran of Communist draconianism like Khrushchev, so today many Italian peasants, few of whom spend their time reading history, are easily beguiled into accepting the Communist Party as the champion of the small farmer.

As always, the Communists, inflexible in their ultimate aim, are infinitely opportunistic in their choice of means. *L'Unità* in its November 14 issue carried a full five-page report "On the political situation and the achievements of the Party." (Italian Communists share with their brethren everywhere a penchant for interminable and dull reports.) While repeatedly stressing its role as the workers' party, without batting an eye the report also presents the Communist Party as the champion of middle class consumers, small farmers, craftsmen, small businessmen and regional autonomists. That just about covers the field. Little is left for the D.C. but big business, big landlords, and the sacristans.

This, of course, is a myth; but again, the thing that counts is not whether it is a myth but whether enough people believe it. Until now enough people have not believed it. The Christian Democrats, who in 1958 polled almost twice as many votes as the Communists, remain the most popular party in the country. The margin of strength is, however, too small, because in those same 1958 elections the combined Communist and Socialist vote was less than 2,000,000 short of the Christian Democratic total and prevented the latter from winning an absolute majority, a fact which added immensely to its problems.

IF THE Communists and Socialists should be able to combine and if the D.C. should suffer substantial loss of popular support, the fat would be in the fire. At the moment no love is lost between Togliatti and Nenni. Togliatti, in characteristically doctrinaire Communist schoolmaster fashion, delights to scold Nenni for his "incorrect analyses" of political situations; while Nenni, who probably does not like to be talked to like a schoolboy any more than the next man, enjoys throwing what Mr. K. would call the "dead rat" of Hungary in Togliatti's face. Nevertheless, the Communist Party never ceases to woo the Socialist Party over Nenni's head; and a good third of the members of the Socialist Party's national committee favors, as against Nenni, an open alliance. Add to this the fact that, if Nenni does not dislike Togliatti less, he dislikes the majority wing of the D.C. even more.

These are the factors which give greater urgency to the necessity of achieving a solid unity in the D.C. The serious threat to that unity developed following the bitter glow of unexpected defeat in the regional Sicilian elections last year. The defeat was especially bitter to the D.C. because it had thrown all of its forces into the campaign.

One of the chief factors leading to defeat was the issue of regional autonomy. Italy has been united in a single state for less than one hundred years. For many hundreds of years before that Sicily, Naples and Savoy were independent kingdoms and other parts of Italy were independent principalities. All these regions have conserved their traditions, their regional characteristics. Anyone can quickly see that a Neapolitan is not a Roman nor a Roman a Milanese. Autonomous instincts run deep and strong, and the D.C. has allowed itself to appear in the guise of a champion of Roman centralization and Roman domination. This can be politically costly, as was shown in Sicily where the Communists thumped the autonomy drums for all they were worth.

The main cause of the defeat, closely related to the autonomy issue, was a breach in D.C. unity. The Sicilian Milazzo broke away from the Christian Democrats and formed his own Christian Social Party. Despite the best efforts of the D.C., which did not help its cause by its position on regional autonomy, and despite (or perhaps because of) the open intervention of the Holy Office in Rome, which forbade collaboration with the Communists, Milazzo won enough votes to be able to form a government, with the support of a weird combination of Communists, Socialists, big landlords, monarchists, and a few D.C. "sharpshooters," so-called because from behind the protective covering of the secret parliamentary ballot they neatly shot down their own party. The situation has now been unexpectedly saved for the D.C. by the revelations of corruption in the Milazzo government. But it was indulgence in political chicanery, rather than changed conditions, that brought the Sicilian irregulars to grief.

Baron Francesco Pace, one of the largest, and it must be admitted, progressive landowners on the island, with large citrus and fruit tree acreage, recently justified his political collaboration with the Communists. He and they, he said, had a "common interest" in the political autonomy and economic development of Sicily.

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Which proves that, if outer space has been reached, the limits of naiveté, as of cynicism, have not.

In the wake of the Sicilian set-back a major division developed in the Christian Democratic Party. No doubt it had been developing for some time, but the sharp lines of division only then became marked. It is easier to name the two groups than to describe them. One is known as the " fanfaniani," after their leader Fanfani, noted political economist and head of the government whose overthrow brought the present government, headed by Segni, into power; the other is known as the "dorotei," after the name of the building which has served as their Roman headquarters. The leaders of the "dorotei" group are Segni and Moro, the very able political secretary of the party.

The "fanfaniani" group is often described as representing a left-center orientation, the "dorotei" a right-center orientation. On the other hand Moro insists that on the level of objective and of program there is no substantial difference between the two. The Communists, of course, brand even Fanfani as a "reactionary" serving the interests of the "monopolists" and his social program is a mere "demagogic façade." A number of well qualified neutral observers of the D.C. Seventh Party Congress, held in Florence during the last week in October, in their commentaries agreed with Moro's view and went further to describe both factions as representing a left-center orientation. Indro Montanelli, writing in the *Corriere della Sera,* one of Italy's better newspapers, asserts that both, like most parties in Italy, are of the left, the only difference being that one group, the "fanfaniani," want to take the more direct and precipitous route.

ALL OF this shows the folly of attempting to pin labels. Evidently what you are called depends upon whose ox you are goring. It would probably be closest to the truth to say that the "dorotei," both of whose leaders belonged to the old left-wing of the party, are more moderate in their approach to problems and, where there is a choice, favor less rather than more government intervention in the solution of Italy's economic and social problems, whereas the "fanfaniani," less hopeful of the analgesic powers of private initiative, which in Italy sometimes seems not to initiate very much, advocate a more positive role by the state.

If the programmatic differences of the two groups are hard to define, it is much easier to detect the line of division on what might be called the level of political alignment. The "dorotei" want no truck with Nenni and his Socialist Party. Their position is clear and has been clearly stated. So long as Nenni refuses to follow the example of Socialist parties in other European countries which frankly and openly repudiate the Communists as enemies of human freedom, he cannot be relied upon. His support is neither to be sought nor to be desired. Despite the frequent polemical exchanges between Togliatti and Nenni, the "dorotei" are convinced upon his record that Nenni will never be moved to adopt this anti-Communist position. Nenni's repeated affirmations would seem to support this view.

On the other hand, the "fanfaniani" are persuaded that, despite Nenni's record and his affirmations, he can be wooed away from the Communists. They feel that the door to collaboration can and should be kept open. They feel that there is a better chance of finding support for the kind of social reform which Italy needs from Nenni than from the right. Some deeply felt convictions polarize around these two positions. In the months preceding the Seventh Party Congress the debate waxed strong, often intemperate, and sometimes bitter. *La Civilita Cattolica,* thinks that, however intemperate at times, the debate left no permanent scars and did serve to clarify ideas and crystallize problems for the Congress. Time will tell whether or not this judgment is correct.

At the end of a week of spirited sessions at Florence the moderate wing emerged victorious in the election of delegates to the National Council, the party governing board. The "dorotei" captured fifty-two seats, the "fanfaniani" thirty-six. When to these are added the forty-five regional, local and parliamentary delegates, the "dorotei" maintain substantially the same margin of superiority percentage wise.

IN THE weeks that have followed the dominating question has been whether, despite the differences, substantial unity can be achieved. Moro, who seems to have won the respect of all, has talked unity in season and out and has worked tirelessly to bring it about. Whether this unity will prove real, as friends of democracy hope, or illusory, as the Communists and Nenni Socialists hope, remains to be seen. The "fanfaniani" have made it clear that they do not intend to play the part of rubber stamps. They feel that, although a minority, they represent forty-six per cent of the Christian Democratic voters and that they have an obligation to make the minority view felt.

Meanwhile, the other parties wait in the wings to see how the drama unfolds, ready to rush on stage and step into the lead if the D.C. collapses. Nenni urges the "fanfaniani" not to support the majority group. Malagodi, leader of the Liberal Party, warns the "dorotei" not to make concessions to the "fanfaniani." While, as the weekly newsmagazine *Vita* remarked in one of its recent issues, "the Communists, as always in such situations, hold themselves ready for every eventuality, prepared to exploit to the full every error of the democrats. Their ideal is an 'operation Milazzo' on a national scale. They would like to put the unity of the Christian Democrats to the test."



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# The Classics in America

by HORACE GREGORY

IN AMERICA and within the last twenty years, something like a revival of Greek literature in translation has taken place. In Ezra Pound's witty, half-ironic lines from *Instigations,* our date of a beginning (circa 1920) is secure:

The thought of what America,
The thought of what America,
The thought of what America would be like
If the Classics had a wide circulation . . .
Oh well!
It troubles my sleep.

It is not too much to say that—with his slogan, "Make It New—" Pound, at the very least, was an instigator in that revival. Reasons for the success of that revival in America, most recently marked by the University of Chicago translations, are not too hard to find—and some general reasons which are less obvious, yet deeply influential, are among the paradoxes of American culture. These can be found in our eighteenth century, neo-classical beginnings, our War of Independence from the British, our foundation of a New Republic with its Declaration of Independence, written in the very language of eighteenth century neo-classical English.

Behind that language was the *idea* of a union of independent states, resembling at some distance, models of the Greek City States as well as their spiritual and philosophic need for independent thinking. Today, all this is hidden by the existence of a monolithic United States. The *idea* behind it glimmers at a far greater distance—and yet it persists, if not in literal facts, in individual contrasting attitudes. At extremely odd moments lip service, scarcely more than the reflex of an old habit, is paid to the *idea* that Greek literature is truly classical, is "best."

If as D. H. Lawrence said, "America is haunted by the ghosts of the Indians," it is also haunted by the ghost of an idea of what Greek literature is. Behind Ezra Pound's concern for the Classics, there are Edgar Poe's lines "To Helen," which, in these days, if not every schoolboy, almost every schoolteacher knows. There is also the legend that on the beach at Coney Island, Walt Whitman read Homer in Pope's translation. These large, somewhat amorphous outlines of a continuous strain of Greek models handed down within our culture show an off-the-earth standard of excellence called "Greek" that has retained an imaginative appeal to Americans.

Meanwhile, for the last fifty years Greek and Latin have been slowly, steadily dropping out of secondary school curricula. (Today in England the same decline is reported.) These facts are too well known to cause surprise or alarm—and what has been substituted are studies in practical or gadget sciences, as well as a welter of so-called "social" sciences in which a fairly bright boy could keep himself informed by reading newspapers after school. The exceptions to this general condition are that for the sake of prestige, prep schools are retaining classes in Latin at least, and that certain colleges and universities are reinforcing, "making new," their studies in Latin and Greek.

As in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, class lines in America today are beginning to be defined by whether or not one has some familiarity with the Classics. On one side of the line (we may call them "helots" or "prols") stand those who can talk "world affairs" or take a T.V. set apart; on the other side are those who spark dinner conversations by reference to Gilbert Highet—and the Classics. (Fifty years ago Highet's name would have been Hamilton Wright Mabie or Dr. Henry Van Dyke; the names change, but the voice and image remain the same.) At this point, Pound's lines on "the thought of what America . . ." are prophetic.

Obviously, a renewed demand for Classics in translation fills the shifting need for prestige in teaching the Humanities in American universities. Latin and Greek can neither be taught or learned overnight. Classics in translation fill the gap between learning an ancient language and having some idea of what its literature contains and means. The twentieth century American is always eager to take the short cut toward any field of knowledge; it has the appearance of being quick and *active,* whether it is directed toward making money, or toward the intangibles of education, faith and intellect.

There are still other urgencies creating a demand for the Classics in translation, and the most important of these is curiosity concerning and the indiscriminate practice of psychiatry. It is generally known that Freud and Jung drew hints of their formulations from sources in ancient myths. "The Oedipus complex" is a phrase

Mr. Gregory, critic, poet and translator, translated a recently published edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Viking).



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that has become a bromide among American housewives whenever they discuss the peculiar behavior of their children—or the husband of a suburban neighbor.

AND WHERE are the Greeks? They are in Homer and in the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripedes. They are a murderous lot: arrogant, deceitful, greedy. But they are also quick-witted, philosophic, and at their best gifted with the highest reaches of human imagination. Their wars showed them to be inept politicians. Their intellectuals grew familiar with an entire universe of being, and unlike Americans, they had no use at all for facts that lead to knowledge of gadget sciences. Perhaps the visual sensation of having sky and sea close to them, fitted their minds within a knowledgeable cosmos; perhaps the intensity of the white sunlight through which they moved and breathed gave them the feeling of participation in the solar system. We know their gods were near to them, were close to natural phenomena and, by special favor, entered their psyches, guided and protected them. Yet lines were clearly drawn between mortals, demi-gods, and gods. For mortals self-knowledge was the first necessity; the hierarchy fostered independence, both in thinking and the exercise of wills. When totalitarianism by way of Sparta approached them, and when monotheism by way of Plato and Socrates began to appear in the clouds, Olympus, shaken by the Peloponnesian Wars on earth, lost its authority, and the hierarchy from Zeus to mortals crumbled.

It was during the conflicts of that crucial fifth century B.C. that Greek tragic drama reached its apotheosis, and at its center was Sophocles, the greatest religious dramatist of all time. Aeschylus rises toward him; Euripedes declines from him; something like an end was soon in sight. The concentrated essence of Greek art—Greek life—dramatic in all its forms, became diffused into the larger orbit of Hellenism.

UNDER THE joint editorship of Richmond Lattimore and David Grene we now have an American version of *The Complete Greek Tragedies.* (University of Chicago Press. 4 vols. $20.) First steps toward a complete work of that kind were taken by Dudley Fitts when he edited eleven Greek Plays in Modern Translation (1947). Undoubtedly, Pound was his Instigator, yet Fitts in his own right was and is a translator and poet of extraordinary wit—to which his versions of Aristophanes bear lively witness. By temperament and spirit he was vigorously opposed to British nineteenth century versions of the Classics. Truly enough, Sir Gilbert Murray's versions of the tragedies are inept and cloudy. Sir Gilbert had read Swinburne both unwisely and unwell. This is not to dispraise Swinburne, but to say that Sir Gilbert lacked Swinburne's genius—and also lacked an instinct for dramatic action—a loss too great for an intelligent reinterpretation of Greek tragedy. Sir Gilbert literally *sang* his readers to sleep.

It was Fitts who opened the doors to the Lattimore-Grene versions of Greek tragedy and, by some strange irony, he receives no adequate mention from Lattimore. The entire work is impressive. As an example of American technical skill in scholarship it has few equals. It has been designed to answer the questions of the intelligent college student as well as the general reader in the Humanities. In reading it no one is tempted to fall asleep. For the first time in English the dramatic force employed by three Greek dramatists is made visible and clear—which is a tremendous gain toward an understanding of Greek genius. All this is on the side of high merit.

As far as poetry is concerned there are some losses—and the exceptions to these are in Robert Fitzgerald's version of Sophocles' "Oedipus at Colonus" and Witter Bynner's version of Euripedes' "Iphigenia in Tauris." Tone deafness plagues most of the translators, and some have an awkward habit of placing adjectives after nouns in unEnglish fashion. Yet the editors' versions of the plays set a standard for brilliance, efficient rendition, and seriousness of intention—an example may be found in Grene's "Oedipus the King" and another in Lattimore's version of Euripedes' "Helen."

In America at least there need be no further excuses for not understanding why Greek drama has survived.

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## THE TRIMMER'S LENTEN REVERIE

I slept soundly through the Passion and Death.
At Corinth I raised my head to wag a question.
I pursed my lips to avoid the bright breath
Then, bored, I tickled Arius to dissension.

I led the Child by hand through the Dark Ages,
Saw Theodoric's point while deploring his taste,
Predicted printing while the monks marred pages.
These Crusades, I remarked, are injudicious waste.

Precursing Orlando, I was born again at Florence.
Petrarch rhymed my body, Chaucer came to kiss my hand.
I shocked Ficino with the manners of D. H. Lawrence.
When Luther bellowed, I invented the saraband.

Descartes showed promise, I became a Rosicrucian.
For the mad, young Smart I composed a Grecian prayer.
I counselled Bonaparte on the uses of Revolution,
But I had to run for life from Baudelaire.

Now Madness is ripe, my Lebensraum is shrinking
Stalin's de trop and Christ will not relent.
My friends below have taken to insolent winking
As my luminal increases throughout Lent.

THOMAS F. CURLEY.



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# SOUTHERN RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

THIS WAS written when "civil rights legislation" was entering non-stop debate in the Senate. There was no great hope that people (either Senators or citizens) would listen very attentively to the debates. The Negro-Southern polemic is a devastatingly unhappy one to listen to and study; and it is one which can be used most facilely, without study, for political purposes extraneous to the problem itself.

The present governmental question concerns enforcing uniform standards to cover Negroes, particularly in the South, and is not concerned with protecting a minority in its cultivation of minority standards and ways of life. The Negroes are not fighting for a minority way of life. They are trying to be free of special discrimination and to possess American possibilities like the others. The Southern whites, rather, are the minority struggling to protect their standards and ways from Negroes and the North.

Civil rights and civil liberties have grown, in easy debate, to be crudely ambiguous terms. They can mean adherence to, and enforcement of, uniform standards for all the community; and they can mean tolerance toward, and the protection of, minorities following and developing their own purposes and ends.

In one way or another, virtually everyone is a member of a minority, sometimes an enemy of "the Joneses," of "Madison Avenue," of "the Corporations," and of "the Government." Serious and effective minorities have some continuance and a visible formation: an internal unity based upon more or less objective standards and aspirations. Such a group may be working primarily for its own integrity, tending to withdraw in some manner or fashion from the nation; or it may be trying to project its ideas and standards over the whole community as a new uniformity. Minorities differ importantly in the means and manners they use to preserve their own status or to push their ways on others.

Except for callous fanatics, totalitarians, and primitive-minded advocates of social engineering and equalitarianism, a crackdown on minorities must always be a reluctant and sorrowful operation. It is a deprivation of civil *liberties,* a restriction of personal freedom, and a rough meddling with the mind and emotions of our countrymen. Nevertheless, it is an obvious, if tragic, fact that the "integrity" of one minority can conflict with that of others. The threat of a new, minority-sponsored uniformity can be too distasteful for tolerance. The means used by the challenging minority can be unacceptable.

At the beginning, and after the interlude of Civil War and Reconstruction, a white majority or minority group was not disqualified in the Republic because, in the pursuit of its own political or economic or cultural purposes, it specially penalized Negroes. Now the rules are changing. Time and experience, and progress, perhaps, or at least a shift, in the way we examine our conscience, and a sharper propaganda with stronger stimuli from circumstances, demand an ending of Negro penalization: and this is a liberating purpose to seek with joy.

But there is a wretched negative purpose and content on both sides of the struggle which hurts the whole nation. The Southern white community glorifies its culture, claiming—and demonstrating—that it embraces many more characteristics and qualities than exploitation of Negroes. They do not present it as a system based exclusively and necessarily upon segregation and subordination of people simply because they are ever so slightly "colored." The work for the South, its seems apparent, is to re-work its version of the American system without that unfair depression of Negroes. But the South almost inextricably confuses legitimate self-preservation with a campaign to prevent Negroes from preserving the momentum of their own remarkable advance. They ruin the positive purpose of developing their Southern minority culture by the negative determination to keep Negroes down. Lee, after all, did surrender at Appomattox—and he did not end his days a negative and bitter old man.

On the side attacking the Southern position, there is legitimate intellectual and moral fervor, but also no little deviousness and vindictiveness cracking the surface. The Southern system is not attacked by many forces only for the sake of justice or charity. Aside from trivial politics, the struggle is also used by many to strike down an independent dignity, and to push upon the South and the whole country a new sort of doctrinaire uniformity. Not only must Southern ballot boxes, schools and lunch counters be purged of segregation and selection; but the entire nation's school systems, political life, social and economic character must be ground to an even, unaccented, centrally dominated mechanism.

The preservation of civil liberties, the protection of all minorities, and the defense against oppressive national uniformity greatly need the force of Southern "Particularism." The job is to segregate the Southern System from injustice and hardness to Negroes, while trying, with sympathy and good will and good hope, to preserve and develop the special values and the stubborn integrity of a reinforced Southern minority, since Washington and Jefferson the most famous in the United States.

PHILIP BURNHAM.



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# THE STAGE

## THE LOESSER BUCOLIC

IT IS a diversion of the New York theater—supremely more solacing, so often, than the plays—that one may take refuge from the stress of any event in that sharp perception of incongruity we understand as the habit of wit. So it is, marking an instance, at "Greenwillow"—Mr. Frank Loesser's latest version of pastoral—that you may sit among the affluent society in all its peacock plumes, cosseted by mink and lamé, watching a fable of rural virtue and witchery, of maidens in the grass, alas; of yearning for the gentle hearth, and the cow sweetly chewing its cud. One thinks of Marie Antoinette and her milking-stool; of Horace lunching at that villa, and Vergil's somber meditations on a broken furrow: worldlings all, with this last difference: their flowers and freshets were only a stroll beyond the gates, a genuine reality, hard and not-to-be-denied as the panoply and stones of Versailles or the Appian Way. Ours are a stealing fancy, anodyne for the urban nerves, and distilled, ironically, by alchemists who would not know Lily of the Valley from Hop o' My Thumb: who are convinced, indeed, that at the savage heart of Central Park, hard by the Obelisk, there lives still a tribe of Indians, ravening.

Miss Beatrice Joy Chute is decidedly not of this company. I had not read her novel of *Greenwillow,* yet something residual and shattered in its musical investiture obscurely suggested an English *ambiance:* that Anglican cosiness, succulence of plum pudding and billberry tarts—diluted Dickens, perhaps, or Mrs. Gaskell *redivivus.* And I was amused to find my intimation confirmed by later glancing at the work: a capital little fable, ripe and modest. 'Tis pity, as so many of these stage villagers are wont to announce at unnerving moments, that Mr. Loesser saw fit to translate it to R.F.D., Greenwillow, Noplace, U.S.A. 'Twould have been better if 'twere left in one of 'Twomas Hardy's rustic pockets. Nothing so alarms as a gaggle of peasants from Lindy's or Sardi's, all teeth and eyelashes, gyrating to the footlights with the shrill and off-pitch information that "this day is borrowed from heaven." A pox on Messers. Rodgers and Hammerstein for first sending those cowboys into that bloody, beautiful morning! They are the prime movers of this first third of "Greenwillow" which—Miss Chute and her lovely lissome tree aside—is but an unmitigated gurgle of instant syllabub.

With the advent of the professionals—Mr. Cecil Kellaway as a pattering divine (very High Church, I think), and Miss Pert Kelton (Chaucer *cum* Sammy's Bowery Follies, as it were)—the whole takes on elation and savor. So too with Mr. Loesser's musical writing. His duet for the competing ecclesiastics, with madrigal overtones, is enchanting; and his raucous set-piece for Miss Kelton a real knockout. How very good Mr. Loesser is at this sort of thing! how indispensable a light artist! and why must he go whoring after strange gods—like, maybe, the Metropolitan Opera—and fill his noodle with rubbishy ideas of *the folk?* I say folk is spinach, and I say the hell with it. No culture but our own has ever conceived it—in art—as more than raw material, to be employed as a motif only, a pigment, a strand of experience. Indeed, the force of our obsession with folk—it is the *nostalgie de la boo-hoo* of intellectual rubes on television—is a comment on how efficiently we have obliterated it. Art is artificial: let us admit it. Does Mme. Elisabeth Schwarzkopf yodel to the banjo in Washington Square, happy in the knowledge that she is being a genuine folk? Hardly. She reveals the content of an Austrian ballad by the same process that she reveals the Brahms *Immer leise* or a Mozart aria; she does not, that is, attempt to palm us off with something bogus from back behind the barn.

Down with Folk!

I must mention Mr. Anthony Perkins—a rag, a handsome bone, and what a hank of hair!—very much *de trop* here, and ruthlessly charming, yet what for him to do, poor boy, but strain against his pockets, hoot hopefully every so often, and profess love to another luckless creature made up as Miss Virginia Dare? Never mind, he will survive: he has a future and, fortunately, a past.

There is also a cow, big as a Cadillac, prettily chewing that cud, and a tender cream-and-smoke kitten, who will doubtless swell with time into majesty and vastly disapprove of everything.

Is this a curious notice? "Greenwillow" is a curious entertainment. 'Twas good to be back among the folk, though 'twere better to see one than be one. Nor did I fail to remark a few randy top-hats and decolletés pitching down West 52nd Street in what seemed most suspiciously like a morris dance. One wonders: have I given syllabub its due? (*At the Alvin.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

# THE SCREEN

## CERTAINLY CAN CAN-CAN

CONSIDERING that it wasn't very much to start with, "Can-Can" has come through fairly well as a movie. Except for a couple of songs, Cole Porter's score for the stage musical comedy was quite undistinguished; and Abe Burrows' book was an old-fashioned affair with a boy-girl plot and a lot of



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tired jokes about Paris in the nineties when the bluenoses wanted to censor the can-can dance. The stage show, however, did have Lilo and Gwen Verdon, who added some style to the whole thing. The movie, alas, does not have Lilo and Gwen Verdon, and it has blown the stage show's mediocrity up to vast proportions on a Todd-AO screen; but it does have some lovely color and pretty Irene Sharaff costumes, and it added three old Cole Porter songs that are sung well and liven up the sound track considerably.

For a while, as the picture ambled along in its first reels, I thought the script by Dorothy Kingsley and Charles Lederer was also going to improve on Burrows' original. Its story about the young judge (Louis Jourdan) who plans to prosecute the cafe owner (Shirley MacLaine) whose girls do the forbidden can-can is rather amusing. But having few complications, other than those cooked up by the elderly judge (Maurice Chevalier) who realizes the disparity in the couple's positions and by the cagey lawyer (Frank Sinatra) who loves Shirley but hates marriage, this plot wears quite thin. And, strangely enough, it makes Jourdan so likable that the audience pulls for him and is unprepared for the solution that drops him like a hot penny. Although no great shakes as a singer, Jourdan has a great deal of winning charm and puts over his songs, including the old hit "You Do Something to Me," with quiet appeal. Furthermore, he and Maurice Chevalier, who plays what is almost a minor role and of course sings effectively whenever given a chance, lend an authentic French note to the whole proceedings. This is a note that is sadly lacking in most of the film, which is crowded with phoney 1896 Parisian atmosphere and sets that make no pretense at realism. Perhaps this is just as well, because Frank Sinatra and Shirley MacLaine in the lead roles are as un-French and Broadway as any two could be. Most of the time Sinatra carries on like a brash press-agent, but he handles his songs extremely well, especially when he is trying to console himself with "It's the Wrong Time and the Wrong Place." And he and Shirley give their all to the Porter oldie, "Let's Do It." Miss MacLaine doesn't have to be French to be cute—and cute she is, running her Montmartre cafe, mooning over Jourdan or spiting and snaring Sinatra. And her dances, though sometimes risqué, are certainly peppy.

The can-can dance, which Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev called "immoral" when he was visiting Hollywood last summer, is done in the usual fast can-can ballet style and is certainly no more startling than some of the other aspects of the picture: the low-cut costumes, the wisecracks about promiscuity or the Garden of Eden ballet in which Marc Wilder and Juliet Prowse (both accomplished dancers) join Miss MacLaine in the reeling and writhing. No doubt Producer Jack Cummings and Director Walter Lang hoped to come up with another "Gigi." They tried, but perhaps too hard; and they didn't have as good a show to start with. While it has some lively entertainment, it also has too much vulgarity: "Can-Can" can't stand the enlargement it got on the wide screen. It's an elaborate try; but it is not, in the words of one of its songs, "C'Est Magnifique."

AUDIENCES anxious to shed the synthetic French of something as theatrical as "Can-Can" might turn to the real French theater as the movies have photographed it in "The Would-Be Gentleman." It is done by the Comédie Française, and is the first in a series planned by this famous theatrical company which hopes eventually to film their entire repertoire—a project that certainly deserves commendation. And Molière's delightful satiric comedy is an excellent choice as a starter.

Since the film uses the single Comédie Française set and their lovely costumes and first-rate acting cast, the effect is often more theatrical than cinematic; but the comedy itself has so much action and Henri Alekan's color photography is so lively that the audience forgets every now and then that this is filmed theater and not a real movie in which the visuals are more important than the spoken words. Molière's dialogue is spoken by experts, and will please students of French. Others will be grateful for the well-translated sub-titles and will even enjoy hearing the French for such oft-repeated quotations as: "May your roses bloom all the year round" and M. Jourdain's wonderful discovery during the philosophy lesson: "To think that for forty years I've been speaking prose without knowing it!"

Louis Seigner is excellent as "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," the wealthy social climber who is made a fool of by everyone around him. He plays the fool and no doubt deserves the razzing he gets; but Louis Seigner succeeds in winning our affection more than the wiseacres who find him such easy prey. Also outstanding in the large and good cast are Jean Meyer (who also directed the film), Marie Sabouret, Georges Descrieres, Jean Piat and many others, all of whom carry on in a style that Molière would have approved of.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

# COMMUNICATIONS

## "TEILHARD DE CHARDIN"

Rochester, N.Y.

TO THE EDITORS: Karl Stern's interesting review of Father Teilhard de Chardin's, *The Phenomenon of Man,* (Jan. 1, 1960) is marred, I believe, by the repetition of two errors from Lecomte du Noüy's



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*Human Destiny*. Since there is some danger that these errors are becoming endemic in the Catholic press, I hope you can allow me to try to dispose of at least one of them, arising from a misapplication of the second law of thermodynamics.

Following du Noüy Dr. Stern says: "The most obtuse materialist must admit that this process of evolution, even in its crude Darwinian conception, is anti-entropic: it goes against the second law of thermodynamics according to which all energy ought to 'deteriorate' and lead to a kind of thermal death. In other words, the forms under which energy appears in the process of evolution are against all mathematical probability. This alone excludes the possibility of evolution as a chance occurrence and constitutes a scientific proof of creation."

Although du Noüy's general intent was admirable, and *Human Destiny* contains much of value in directing scientists away from the scientific materialism and narrow specialization so characteristic today, he has not, I believe, produced a *scientific* proof of creation or of the necessity of outside help in the evolution of animals. Indeed, there is certainly some question as to whether he even intended to try to do this.

The second law of thermodynamics can be stated in several different ways, and the form in which Dr. Stern has given it is correct. However, in order to see the error of its application as far as the evolution of animals is concerned, it is better to state it in a somewhat different, but equivalent form.

In this form the second law says that things, left to themselves, tend to run down spontaneously, to become more disordered. More precisely, the degree of order, *in the universe as a whole*, tends to decrease. In applying this law, it is necessary to divide the "universe," at least mentally, into two parts, commonly called "the system" and "the surroundings."

Perhaps the most common error in applying the second law of thermodynamics, the error, indeed, which du Noüy made, is to focus attention only upon the system and to state the law in the form: In any spontaneous process *(i.e.,* a process which will occur by itself without outside help), the degree of order of the *system* decreases; or its converse: If the degree of order of a *system* increases, the process cannot be spontaneous.

Using the law in this erroneous form, du Noüy proceeded to argue as follows: The paleontologic records show an increase in order of the animals (the system), since the higher animals (greater order) came later in time than the lower animals (less order). But the second law of thermodynamics says that an increase in the order of a system is not possible spontaneously. Therefore, evolution is not a spontaneous process. Since evolution is not a spontaneous process, outside help (God) was needed to bring greater order from the less.

The correct formulation of the second law takes into account the changes in the degree of order which occur *both* in the system *and in the surroundings,* and may be stated as follows: In any spontaneous process, the sum of the "change in the order of the system" plus the "change in the order of the surroundings" is always greater than zero.

It is the custom among scientists to represent increases in the measure of order by negative numbers, decreases, by positive numbers. To take an actual physical example, often used in textbooks of thermodynamics, consider the change of liquid water into solid water (ice) at 14°F, which is eighteen degrees below the normal freezing point of water. Liquid water which has been carefully cooled to this temperature will change spontaneously to solid water. In this change the order of the system (the water) increases, while that of the surroundings decreases. The values ordinarily calculated for this change are:

Change in the measure of the order
of the system .....—4.9 entropy units
Change in the measure of the order
of the surroundings .....5.0 " "
Total change in the measure of the
order of the universe ..... 0.1 e.u.,

which is greater than zero. Here, then, we have an example of a spontaneous change in which the order of the system increases. This contradicts du Noüy's erroneous formulation of the second law.

I am not sure that the second law can be applied properly to the evolution of animals, but if it can, and if the animals past and present can be lumped into one system, we might have:

Change in the order of the animals..... —X
Change in the order of the non-animals ..... Y
Total change in the order of the universe ... Y—X

If Y is greater than X, there is nothing in the second law that says that an evolutionary increase in order cannot happen spontaneously.

Personally I believe that evolution cannot be accounted for satisfactorily as a spontaneous process.


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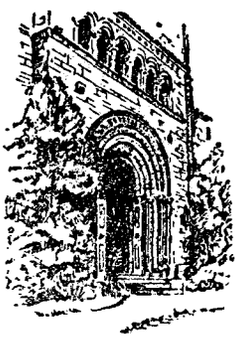

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However, the arguments for this are from metaphysics. As far as I have been able to make out, there is no *evidence* from the physical or biological sciences to show that evolution could be spontaneous, although a high percentage of scientists, whose philosophical training is several orders of magnitude less than their scientific training, believe evolution could be spontaneous.

Finally, I believe that Lecomte du Noüy's second conclusion, "that even the arrangements of atoms in one molecule of protein, within the space of time which scientists commonly allot to the cosmogenesis, cannot have come about by chance," is open to such serious question on the grounds both of mathematical analysis and results of recent experiments in the synthesis of protein building blocks from the elements that it should not be used as a so-called scientific proof of creation.

J. KENNETH O'LOANE.

### "SEGREGATED SHAKESPEARE"

Boston, Mass.

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. N. Bryllion Fagin's incisive article, "Segregated Shakespeare" [Feb. 26], born of his own personal experience, brings forcefully to public notice one aspect of our many-faceted national problem of segregating Negro Americans which is perhaps never likely to be dramatized before the entire nation and observant world like incidents arising from public school integration or the current "sit-down-to-eat" movement about which your editorial in the same issue, "Youth Must Be Served," deals. Nevertheless, exclusion from public libraries blights the cultural development of even the comparatively few young Negroes who achieve college. Readers of Richard Wright's autobiographical *Black Boy* will remember the ingenious ruses to which he had to resort in order to take out books from a Mississippi public library. Mr. Fagin has earned our gratitude for his enlightening discussion.

WILLIAM HARRISON.

### "ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CATHOLICISM"

New York, N.Y.

TO THE EDITORS: We are most grateful for Father Leonard F. X. Mayhew's kind comments on *The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* [Feb. 26]. However, I do wish to correct a misconception, which I gather is quite common.

Father Mayhew writes that "all the writers are French." Although all the books thus far issued represent the work of French *and* Belgian writers, future volumes, including some scheduled for publication this year, will include the work of British, American, Canadian, Italian, German and Czech authors. Because the series originated with a French publisher, the first works commissioned and available for publication were, of course, French. However, later works have been commissioned, either to replace French volumes thought too parochial for readers in this country or to be included in the French series, and these will begin to appear this year.

K. S. GINIGER,
Hawthorn Books.

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**BOOKS**

# Everybody Called Him "Ronnie"

MONSIGNOR RONALD KNOX. By Evelyn Waugh. Little, Brown. $5.

By WILLIAM CLANCY

EVELYN WAUGH has carefully defined both the limits and the tone of his biography of Ronald Knox. In his preface he writes that the primary purpose of his book "is to tell the story of [Knox's] exterior life; not to give a conspectus of his thought; still less to measure his spiritual achievements." And Mr. Waugh tells us that if the picture he has drawn seems somber, it is intentionally so. The popular image of Ronald Knox is of a "cherished and privileged survivor of a golden age." But, he writes, "genius and sanctity do not thrive except by suffering. If I have made too much of Ronald's tribulations, it is because he hid them, and they must be known to anyone who seeks to appraise his achievement."

Mr. Waugh's picture is indeed somber. It escapes being tragic only because Ronald Knox himself would have scorned the notion of a "tragic destiny." Knox was not a Newman nor was he meant to be. Parallels between the careers of the two converts are obvious but superficial. Both intellectually and psychologically, they are worlds apart. Everyone—undergraduates fresh at Oxford, remote acquaintances, the little children of friends—called Knox "Ronnie." Newman could not have been called "Johnnie"—even by Hurrel Froude himself.

Ronald Knox was, in the words of Mr. Waugh's preface, "the brilliantly precocious youth, cosseted from childhood; the wit and scholar marked out for popularity and fame; the boon companion of a generation of legendary heroes." He was the son of an Anglican bishop; he made a brilliant success at Oxford, and at twenty-four was ordained to the Anglican priesthood and elected a Fellow and Chaplain of Trinity College. At Trinity, he consolidated his early fame and developed his own cult, the members of which were, like himself, advanced Anglo-Catholics. But by 1917 he had decided to submit to Rome.

Shortly before his submission, his father, the Bishop of Manchester, told Ronald: "Honestly I look upon



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the Roman priesthood as the grave of the talent that is especially yours." Like Newman's friends at Oxford seventy-five years before, Knox's friends in 1917 could see nothing but frustration and heartbreak in a decision to forsake the promise of his Anglican vocation for the uncertainties of an "alien" creed. But Knox was convinced and, with little of the public fanfare that marked Newman's conversion in 1845, he was received into the Church of Rome. Two years later he was ordained a Catholic priest.

The section on Knox's conversion occurs in the middle of Mr. Waugh's biography. By the time we reach it both the advantages and the disadvantages of Mr. Waugh's biographical method are clear. We have been treated to a wonderful evocation of Ronald's golden youth and the golden generation of youths that make Oxford pathetically memorable before the end of all these things in the Armageddon of 1914. But in this evocation—in the rigidly enforced externality of Mr. Waugh's treatment—something essential of Knox is lost. He was not a dilettante but in this biography, especially in the first half of it, he emerges as the dilettante par excellence.

All the ecclesiastical naughtiness, the ritualistic fun and games of a certain "advanced" Anglo-Catholicism are here, but there is no hint of any struggle with the high seriousness of a genuine Anglican tradition. Ronald and his friends had a wonderful time for awhile trying to make their corner of the established Church more Roman than Westminster Cathedral. They wore Italian-style surplices and collected rococo religious art; they delighted in scandalizing the Anglican moderates; but there is a remarkable absence of theology in their struggles; in these pages one is left with a suspicion that the Anglican crisis of Knox and his young circle was at least as aesthetic as it was intellectual.

The advantages and disadvantages of Mr. Waugh's method are equally apparent in the second, "Roman" half of the biography. But here the absence of serious attention to Knox's intellectual and spiritual history is not balanced by the external charm of an Oxford youth. We have, rather, the record of an almost too literal fulfillment of the Bishop of Manchester's prophecy about the Roman priesthood's being the grave of his son's talent.

Since Newman it has been a legend in England that the Church does not know how to treat its most brilliant converts; certainly the legend, in Mr. Waugh's treatment at least, seems proved in the Catholic career of Ronald Knox. Knox himself recalled it when he was given great trouble by some members of the hierarchy over his translation of the Scriptures. He wrote, in a letter, that because of this it would be said that "the Church of Rome does not want converts, finds them an embarrassment and does not know what to do with them."

The history of Knox's chaplaincy at Oxford is the history mostly of dull teas and dispirited dinners given by the Chaplain for unwilling undergraduates. Knox wrote, of course, and preached; he did both brilliantly and his wit remained famous. And his translation of the Old and New Testaments would be a historic achievement in any age.

But in this book an awful pall of sadness hangs over every triumph. *Cui bono?* is the question that seems to haunt every chapter. Through it all one has a sense of something missed, and that something is more than "success." It is a realized relationship with a milieu and with an age. Ronald Knox remained provincial all his life. And he remained, in a way, precocious. In Mr. Waugh's biography everything after Oxford seems somehow anti-climactic. We gain a sense of youth and age, and, in between, an endless taking of toast and tea. For the development and substance beyond this, for the Knox that gave profundity to "Ronnie," we must wait for another, more "internal" biography.

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# The Heart of the Mystery

RITUAL IN THE DARK. By Colin Wilson. Houghton, Mifflin. $4.95.

By RICHARD GILMAN

IF IT SEEMS too much to ask of us that we take Colin Wilson seriously, it should be remembered that he does a very fine job of that himself. This Nietzsche in a turtleneck, this Prometheus baring his loins to the vulture from the top of a double-decker bus, never leaves off proclaiming himself the anointed spokesman for one era's end and another's beginning. For the most part his capers have the quality of a man shadow-boxing at some distance from the field of Armageddon and insisting that the real war centers around himself.

Yet he isn't really so foolish nor so beside the point of our contemporary predicaments. For all his schoolboyish rhetoric, his silly proclamations that God is, thanks to him, this time really dead, his preposterous notions of what constitutes being outside and inside and of what it means to be rebellious and/or religious—for all this, Wilson does try for holds upon real dilemmas and true crises and has the courage to offer himself as a symptom and an argument to be rebutted.

His two books of intellectual history and quasi-theological prescription dealt passionately, though of course quite drunkenly, with the phenomenon of the man cut off by temperament and insight from the established values of society and with the rebellious spirit's search for a new religion.

Now he gives us a work of fiction that has clearly been generated from the same culture-hero ambitiousness, the same horn-rimmed stargazing; the polemical apparatus has simply been refitted with an imaginative undercarriage and swiveled round to bear upon a scene that is, hopefully, no longer abstract or snottily undergraduate. We have, Wilson intends us to know, left the bull-session for the workshop.



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As a novel, *Ritual in the Dark* is rather a large egg. Its narrative, based on a Jack-the-Ripper-like theme, does have the superficial excitement of a whodunit or an Alfred Hitchcock film, but there is nothing to make us believe that the frontiers of the imagination have been extended or even that anything useful has been done with traditional materials. Too much of the writing is of this sort of blowsiness and pomposity:

"A new idea came to him. Limitedness. I don't want limits. It is limits that are alien to me. The universe, space, time, being . . . I am god. I am yesterday and today. I am the god Tem, maker of heaven, creator of things which are. If I am not, life is meaningless."

If this passage seems arbitrary and unfair to Wilson, consider this observation from his naturalistic or drawing-room mood and style:

"Very few people are real inside. They need people and distractions as a cripple needs crutches."

Still, there is something worth pondering in the book, and that is its obsessional treatment of an idea that in one form or another is central to a good deal of literature. The novel tells the story of a sexual murderer, a homosexual esthete who kills prostitutes out of a recurrently irresistible impulse, pathological, as he himself recognizes, but capable of being made to yield metaphysical and psychological truths of a different order from those which straightforward morality or clinical analysis would produce. At least that is what Wilson attempts to do.

"I'm not trying to defend the urge to kill," his central observer—a young writer clearly modeled on himself—remarks at one point. "I'm only trying to understand it without oversimplifying it. For instance, couldn't you imagine a murder that comes out of a need to express your freedom?"

Yes we can, and the classic portrayal of it is, of course, *Crime and Punishment*. The briefest comparison of the two novels will tell us what is wrong with Wilson's handling of the idea.

What is wrong is that nothing really happens to Nunne, Wilson's


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murderer. That is to say, he doesn't grow or change, he enacts no true myth of freedom (we should not be put off by the horrific nature of the acts he performs; the essential imaginative concern is with the meaning of freedom) nor an odyssey of perverse human self-testing. He simply becomes weary, fretful and is finally caught.

In Dostoievsky, on the other hand, internal change is everything; from the moment of the crime Raskolnikov is in the grip of an immense alteration of soul. In other words, we are in the presence of a drama, one which has to do with the relations to each other of certain supremely significant aspects of reality, and which issues in the most unrelenting vision of the limits of human freedom. The only drama in *Ritual in the Dark* is the superficial one of pursuit and capture.

Nunne's acts remain for Sorme-Wilson, the writer-observer, a source of fascinated speculation. When he finally repudiates the crimes, after viewing the mutilated body of a victim, it is without having come near the heart of the mystery. And that mystery, apart from what it says to each of us—that we cannot press our claims against the totality of claims, that we may not exercise certain capacities of a physical kind without suffering a more than physical punishment—has another, purely esthetic meaning that could be of great service to energetic but misguided writers like Colin Wilson (and, parenthetically, to many of the beats and to Norman Mailer, whose recent remark about the sort of courage requisite to bash an aged storekeeper over the head is symptomatic of much current nonsense of a bastard-existentialist variety.)

This esthetic meaning is that, for the artist, there is a necessary distinction between kinds and levels of action. One kind, that which is not his, traces itself in actual life, accumulating its results and consequences there. The other, which *is* his, concerns the movements of the creative imagination. There everything may be contemplated, and indeed has to be; there the *possibilities* of the soul are pushed to their remotest borders. The difference is that in the latter, and because of its having been accomplished, we are freed from the necessity of some kinds of extreme material action, to which we may be tempted by our freedom and hunger for the materialization of what is only potential in ourselves.

Which sort of action, which sort of courage for that matter, is the more impressive one? Is it the real, evanescent unrevokable blow, orgy or gesture of defiance, undeviatingly itself, not to be known in itself, resting on palpability, excluding everything outside a narrow hopeless belief in intensity and in the efficacy of knowledge gained through the exploring fingers? Or is it that of which Dostoievsky remains the great exemplar: the holding in terrible balance of the truths of our nature, bringing about an eternal confrontation between the real and the illusory, the actual and the possible, and granting to life a form and viability which life, confined to the sheer exercise of itself from moment to moment, can never possess.

# The Gift of Unabashed Recall

THE EDGE OF DAY. By Laurie Lee. Morrow. $4.

By MAX COSMAN

DISCUSSING a book by a lady of whom it might be said she walked with genius throughout her life, the editor of *The Golden Horizon* tells us that though he retains a very clear impression of the complicated characters who were her familiars, to wit, Mahler, Werfel and Kokoschka, he still remains baffled by the author herself. One thing, however, he does claim to understand: her ability to get over everything.

If, by this, Cyril Connolly means a containment of experience as



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much a forgetting as a remembering, then the animadversion does not apply to Laurie Lee, for the present book proves that he is one who has gotten over nothing in his past.

The *Edge of Day,* originally called *Cider with Rosie,* is an evocative and vibrant reproduction of that period in his life which extended from the age of three, when he was put down before his home in a Cotswold valley, to the point when his identity as a human being discovered he began "to make up poems from intense abstraction, hour after unmarked hour, imagination scarcely faltering once, rhythm hardly skipping a beat. . . ." Of a period, then, to take it out of the realm of ecstasy and place it in history, that started in the final year of the First World War and continued for a decade or so thereafter.

The setting for Mr. Lee's coming of teenage was the little village of the time: twenty or thirty houses on a southeast slope, a population scaling down from squire to deaf-mute beggar, rank personalities like Cabbage-Stump Charlie, Uncle Sid, or Grannies Trill and Wallon feuding to the very grave, a tiny schoolhouse packed to the brim by "universal education and unusual fertility," and, of course, an assortment of sports, observances, superstitions, acts of violence—the whole kit and caboodle of "the end of a thousand years' life," that is, of the end of a society centering about manor, church, and unfragmented home.

But because Mr. Lee, like his archetype Rousseau, has the gift of unabashed recall, *The Edge of Day* is much more than a sociologist's exhibit. In every sense it is a projection of a primary human being, with nothing that concerns him considered too secret to point a moral or adorn a tale.

It refers to his father, who deserted the family, as "a knowing, brisk, evasive man." It builds up a portrait of a Griselda-like mother which, though a loving memorial, nevertheless goes in for expressions like "buffoon" and "scatterbrained." No less anti-heroic about the autobiographer himself, it gives such details as his tykish running of the nose, his childish weaning from the maternal bed, and, *in extenso,* his boyish induction into sex.

Yet actually frank as all this is, it is never wayward or wanton. Mr. Lee, in contradistinction to something Rebecca West has observed about Kafka, is no sadist disguising himself as a hurt child and getting even now. He may be glorifying crass casualty, but he is also a poet, a consistent one, setting down his wonder at existense with the same precision that he set it down in a book of verse like *My Many-coated Man* or in that former prose achievement of his, *A Rose for Winter.*

This precision implies a superb use of imagery. It is tempting to say that Mr. Lee cannot write a page without waylaying the reader with language richly fashioned and apposite. Does he want to figure a child's frightened reaction to something above him? "High overhead ran frenzied larks, screaming, as though the sky were tearing apart." Is the enmity of two old women, incapable of living together or away from each other, to be conveyed? "Like cold twin stars, linked but divided," he writes, "they survived by a mutual balance."

Informed with such notation, idyllic in thought and action, *The Edge of Day* adds up to an old-fashioned pastoral but one not untouched, as is to be expected, by contemporary understanding and irony.


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**William Clancy, formerly an associate editor of The Commonweal, is now editor of the biweekly journal *Worldview*.**

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# Non-Partisan Politics

The editors of The Commonweal are not personally interested in what people call partisan politics. We get no favors from any political party, and we want none. At the same time, we do believe in certain political and social principles.

In foreign affairs, for example, we are what people call "internationalist." We favor the principles behind the United Nations; we believe in united action against Communist aggression; we want world cooperation in the battle against poverty — all of which positions, we believe, are in keeping with the best in Catholic social thought.

Furthermore, we are convinced that the chief political issue today is the struggle between the West and international Communism. To our mind, this far overshadows any domestic concern. Indeed, many domestic concerns are shaped and determined by this struggle — the fact that we are unable to spend as much as we would like in social welfare, for example, is due to the necessity for heavy defense spending.

These convictions on our part cannot be kept in a vacuum; we have to look for men in public life who will exemplify them in practice. We recognize that the application of principles to particular questions is not easy, and that many people may disagree with our attempt, but we have to try. Life and human nature being what they are, the actual realization of these principles in national affairs will always be, at best, approximate. Yet we must make the attempt or these principles will remain lifeless.

— From The Commonweal, May 30, 1958

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